

PROSPECT; or, *View of the Moral World.*

VOL. I.

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No. 40.

Comments upon the Sacred Writings of the Jews and Christians. Exodus Chapter 21 & 22.

THIS twenty-first chapter gives an account of a number of laws, either moral, immoral, or possessing a neutral character; some of them peculiar to the Jewish nation, and some have been incorporated into the civil codes of other countries. The general character of the matters contained in this chapter, shews at the first view that it cannot be of divine origin; so far from having any just claim to this, it carries internal evidence of having been written by some person who had not been accustomed to contemplate, in an extensive manner, the nature of moral and political laws. The most exceptionable thing contained in the twenty-second chapter, is a law concerning witchcraft. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (see verse 18.) This passage of holy writ has laid the foundation of the most cruel and detestable laws, and the most bloody enormities, at which civilized and enlightened man ought to blush and be confounded. New England, and Old England both, bear testimony to this solemn truth, and their laws upon the subject of witchcraft will stand upon the records of history as eternal testimonies of their ignorance, superstition and wickedness. The history of the Salem Witchcraft in this country has marked that epoch with an indelible stain which no time can ever efface. Judges and Jurors, Clergy, Lawyers and Doctors, were all engaged in the savage work; accusation and death were then synonymous terms; in that warfare there was no discharge. This wicked book, this book of superstition, called the Holy Bible, was the cause of all these terrible outrages, these cruel murders! "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" was enough to raise the hue and cry of death throughout the land. Their ferocious prejudices prevented the enquiry, whether there ever was, or could be such a thing

as a witch ; they took this for granted upon the authority of the bible, and immediately proceeded to the work of death and destruction. The poor old women then stood no chance, for religious fanaticism seem to have singled out this class of society as objects on which to wreak its vengeance, for crimes supposed to have resulted from a spirit of witchcraft. It is high time to discard a book which contains a precept so foolish, so absurd, and so wicked as that in the eighteenth verse of this chapter. Every well informed man and woman in society knows, that there is no such thing as a witch ; they do not believe a word of it, and yet many of them pretend to believe in a book which contains such antiquated nonsense. If the book be retained the witches must be retained too ; it would be better to throw them both away together, and then man would become a reasonable being.

OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Addressed to the believers in the book called the Scriptures.

Concluded from our last.

The next is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians." This, like that of the Galatians, contains six short chapters, but Paul is not the writer. The conclusion of it says, "Written from Rome unto the Ephesians by Tychicus."

The next is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians." This Epistle contains but four short chapters, and occupies only four octavo pages. But this, short as it is, Paul is not the writer. The conclusion of it says, "It was written to the Philippians from Rome, by Epaphroditus." It is not dated. Query, were those men who wrote and signed those Epistles Journeyman Apostles, who undertook to write in Paul's name, as Paul is said to have preached in Christ's name?

The next is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle, to the Colossians." This Epistle, like the former, contains only four short chapters, but Paul is not the writer. Doctor Luke is spoken of in this Epistle as sending his compliments. "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you." Chap. 4. v. 14. It does not say a word about his writing any Gospel. The conclusion of the Epistle says, "Written from Rome to the Colossians, by Tychicus and Onesimus."

The next is entitled, "The first Epistle of Paul the Apostle, to the Thessalonians." It contains five short chapters, and the second Epistle contains three still shorter. Either the writer of these Epistles was a visionary enthusiast, or a direct impostor, for he tells the Thessalonians, and, he says, he tells them by the word of the Lord, that the world will be at an end in his and their time; and after telling them that those who are already dead shall rise, he adds, chap. 4, v. 17, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord." Such detected lies as these ought to fill priests with confusion, when they preach such books to be the word of God. These two Epistles are said, in the conclusion of them, to be written from Athens. They are without date or signatures.

The next four Epistles are private letters. Two of them are to Timothy, one to Titus, and one to Philemon. Who they were nobody knows.

The first to Timothy contains six short chapters, and is said to be written from Laodicea. It is without date or signature. The second to Timothy contains four short chapters. It is said to be written from Rome, and is without date or signature. The Epistle to Titus contains three chapters. It is said to be written from Nicopolis in Macedonia. It is without date or signature. The Epistle to Philemon contains one chapter. It is said to be written from Rome by Onesimus. It is without date.

The last Epistle ascribed to Paul is entitled, "The

Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews." It contains thirteen chapters, and is said in the conclusion to be written from Italy, by Timothy. This Timothy (according to the conclusion of the Epistle called the second Epistle of Paul to Timothy) was bishop of the church of the Ephesians, and consequently this is not an Epistle of Paul.

On what slender cob-web evidence do the priests and professors of the Christian religion hang their faith! The same degree of hear say evidence, and that at third and fourth hand, would not in a court of Justice, give a man title to a cottage, and yet the priests of this profession presumptuously promise their deluded followers the kingdom of Heaven. A little reflection would teach men that those books are not to be trusted to; that so far from there being any proof they are the word of God, it is unknown who the writers of them were, or at what time they were written, within three hundred years after the reputed authors are said to have lived. It is not the interest of priests, who get their living by them, to examine into the insufficiency of the evidence upon which those books were received by the popish councils who compiled the New Testament. But if Messrs. Linn and Mason would occupy themselves upon this subject (it signifies not which side they take, for the event will be the same) they would be better employed than they were last presidential election, in writing jesuitical electioneering pamphlets. The very name of a priest attaches suspicion to it the instant he becomes a dabbler in party politics. The New England priests set themselves up to govern the state, and they are falling into contempt for so doing. Men who have their farms and their several occupations to follow, and have a common interest with their neighbours in the public prosperity and tranquility of their country, neither want nor chuse to be told by a priest who they shall vote for, nor how they shall conduct their temporal concerns.

The cry of the priests, that the Church is in danger, is the cry of men who do not understand the interest of

their own craft, for instead of exciting alarms and apprehensions for its safety, as they expect it excites suspicion that the foundation is not sound, and that it is necessary to take down and build it on a surer foundation. Nobody fears for the safety of a mountain, but a hillock of sand may be washed away! Blow then, O ye priests, "the Trumpet in Zion," for the Hillock is in danger.

DETECTOR—P.

CHURCH AND STATE.

His eminence the Cardinal De Caprara, Legate a Latere, has addressed the following letter to the French Bishops.

His eminence the Cardinal De Caprara, Legate a Latere, addressed, on the 9th inst. a letter to the French Bishops, of which the following is a translation:—

"My Lord—Napoleon Bonaparte having been appointed Emperor of the French, you are for the future to make use of the following form of prayer: 'O Lord, preserve our Emperor Napoleon,' instead of that which was ordered by the article of the Concordant, passed between the Holy Apostolic Chair and the Government of France. After this form the following prayer may be recited as it has been already used in the Imperial Chapel:—

'O God! the protector of all kingdoms, and especially
' of the French Empire, grant unto thy servant Napoleon,
' Emperor, that he know and further the wonders of thy
' power, to the end that he, whom thou hast appointed
' our Sovereign, may be always powerful, through thy
' grace.'

"Which I accordingly notify to your Greatness, declaring myself at the same time, your Greatness's true servant.

(Signed)

T. B. CAR. CAPRARA."

It is necessary to remark upon this piece of religious flummery, that there cannot be a greater insult offered either to God or man, than that which is contained in the above. God is declared to be the protector of all the Monarchies of the earth, and especially of that new French despotism of which Bonaparte is the reputed and splendid chief. It follows of course that the Supreme Being is enlisted in the wicked work of enslaving the human race! Slavery, religious or political, ought to be abhorred by every just man. Whatever may be the destinies of the ancient world, it is presumed that the vigorous mind now aggregate y operating in the new hemisphere will repel with indignation the opinion which has marked three fourths of the human race, as objects of eternal slavery and degradation. If man is to be everlastingly enslaved and miserable, it is time for all Theists to pass once more in review their fundamental doctrine. But despotism, civil and religious, shall utterly perish, and the Theism of Nature triumph over the tyrannical examples exhibited in the Old and New Testament, and the use which has been made of these among the temporal kingdoms of the world.

Profession of Faith from Rousseau, continued.

For what reason my soul is thus subjected to my organs of sense, and chained to a body which lays it under so much restraint, I know not, nor presume to enter into the decrees of the Almighty; but I may, without temerity, form a modest conjecture or two on this head. I reflect, that if the mind of man had remained perfectly free and pure, what merit could he have pretended to, in admiring and pursuing that order which he saw already established, and which he would lie under no temptation to disturb? It is true, he would have been happy, but he could not have attained that most sublime degree of felicity, the glory of virtue, and the testimony of a good

conscience. Being united on earth to a mortal body, by ties not less powerful than incomprehensible, the preservation of that body becoming the great concern of the soul, and makes its present apparent interests contrary to the general order of things, which it is, nevertheless; capable of seeing and admiring. It is in this situation, that the making a good use of his liberty becomes at once his merit and his reward, and that he prepares for himself eternal happiness, in combating his earthly passions, and preserving the primitive purity of his will.

But even supposing that in our present state of depravity, our primitive propensities were such as they ought to be, yet, if all our vices are derived from ourselves, why do we complain that we are subjected to them? Why do we impute to the creator these evils which we bring on ourselves, and those enemies we arm against our own happiness? Ah! let us not spoil the man of nature, and he will always be virtuous without constraint, and happy without remorse! The criminals, who pretend they are compelled to sin, are as false as they are wicked. Is it possible for them not to see that the weakness they complain of is their own work; that their first depravation was owing to their own will; that by their wilfully yielding first to temptations, they at length find them irresistible? It is true, they now cannot help being weak and wicked; but it is their fault that they at first became so.

To be continued.

BURNING FOR WITCHCRAFT.

Five women were lately tried at Patna, in Hindostan, on charges of forcery, and being found guilty, were put to death. The governor general on being informed of the circumstance, ordered all the principle persons who composed the tribunals to be apprehended, and arranged before the circuit court of Patna, on charges of the murder

of these women, and the court adjudged them to suffer death. It appeared, however, that this custom had prevailed time immemorial; several of the witnesses remembered numerous instances of persons having been put to death by the Brahmins for sorcery, and one of them in particular proved that his own mother had been tried and executed as a witch—the government therefore pardoned the offenders; but to prevent the recurrence of circumstances so disgraceful to humanity, a proclamation has been issued, declaring that any one forming a tribunal for the trial of persons charged with witchcraft, or aiding or encouraging in any act to deprive such persons of life, shall be deemed guilty of murder, and suffer the penalty attached to that offence.

In the Forest of Mount Gredistye, in the county of Hunyade, in Transylvania, some remains of an extensive ancient city have been discovered; but nothing that shews its name. In the neighbourhood a number of gold coins have been discovered in weight each equal to 22 ducats. On one side, three male figures, the first and last carrying hatchets, with the inscription, in characters Kozen, On the reverse an eagle at rest, holding a crown in its right claw. The learned suppose that the pieces of money were coined at the Etruscan city Cosa, and the three male figures represent a consul, preceded and followed by a lictor. The coins are supposed to be 2000 years old, by antiquarians. The Austrian government has ordered further researches.

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